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17th June, 2003

Clerk to Bills Committee on Construction Workers
Registration Bill,
Legislative Council Secretariat,
3/F Citibank Tower,
3 Garden Road, Central,
Hong Kong.
(Fax: 2121-0420)

Dear Sir,

Construction Workers Registration Bill

I am writing in my capacity as Chairman of the Provisional Construction Industry Co-ordination Board (the Board) in response to your call for public submissions on the Construction Workers Registration Bill currently being scrutinized by the Legislative Council.

In its report published in January 2001, the Construction Industry Review Committee outlined a package of 109 recommendations aiming at uplifting quality and cost-effectiveness of the construction industry in Hong Kong. The proposed construction workers registration system features prominently amongst these recommendations.

As a pan-industry forum to discuss major construction-related matters, the Board examined a submission prepared by the former Works Bureau on this subject back in May last year. There was general consensus that mandatory registration of construction workers should be supported as a positive step forward in enhancing the skill level and productivity of our workforce and in providing a reliable platform for manpower planning and forecast.

Regarding the specific provision that workers with 10 years or more relevant experience could seek exemption from trade tests for registration as skilled workers subject to passing an assessment interview, the Board did not find it too onerous a requirement. We believe a balance has to be struck between the aspirations of workers, the importance of instilling public confidence and the need to ensure that quality improvements will indeed materialize from the proposed registration system.

We hope that the new legislation could be enacted as early as possible to realize our vision of building up an integrated construction industry capable of continuous improvement in a market-driven environment.

Yours faithfully,

Keith Kerr
Chairman